

## RUSSIA AND THE WEST IN IRAN

oped Lenin's ideas, also proclaimed the principle of self-determination, yet he made it conditional. In his thesis on the national question, he made it clear that while in principle Communists supported national self-determination, yet they would not back it under every circumstance. Wrote Stalin:

The Trans-Caucasian Tatars as a nation may assemble, let us say, in their Diet and, succumbing to the influence of (heir beys and mullahs, decide to restore the old order of things and to secede from the slate. According to the meaning of the clause on self-determination they are fully entitled to do so. But will this be in the interest of the toiling strata of the Tatar nation? Should not Social-Democrats<sup>5</sup> interfere in the matter and influence the will of the nation in a definite way? °

Then he explained that the reason for opposing the self-determination of the Tatars is that by seceding they would make a retrogressive step in their historical development; they would thus tend to violate the natural, "scientific" laws of history. "It follows from this," added Stalin, "that the solution of the national problem can be arrived at only if due consideration is paid to historical conditions in their development."

As time went on, it became clear that the Soviet government, and Stalin in particular, had not abandoned the aforementioned attitude, but had maintained it and made it more precise. Writing in *Pravda* in 1920 on "The Policy of the Soviet Government on the National Question in Russia," Stalin stated:

The demand for the secession of the border regions from Russia must be rejected . . . primarily because it is fundamentally opposed to the interests of the mass of the peoples both of the center and of the border regions. Apart from the fact that the separation of the border regions would undermine the revolutionary might of Central Russia . . . the

seceded border  
regions themselves would inevitably fall into bondage to  
international im-  
perialism. One has only to glance at Georgia, Armenia,  
Poland, Finland  
... in order to realize *the counterrevolutionary nature of*  
*the demand for*  
*the secession of the border regions* under present  
international conditions.  
When a life-and-death struggle is being waged and is  
spreading, between  
proletarian Russia and the imperialist Entente, only two  
alternatives con-  
front the border regions:

5 The name used by the Russian Marxists, including the  
Bolsheviks, at that time,  
e *Marxism and the National Question*, p. 24.